



Safeguarding

January 2024

Acknowledgement

This guide has been developed by Sightsavers, the African Disability Forum (ADF) and Youth Business International on behalf of the Futuremakers technical advisory working group on disability and funded by Standard Chartered Foundation.

Purpose, audience and objectives

Purpose	Applying a disability lens in safeguarding is important because it helps to ensure that the unique vulnerabilities and experiences of people with disabilities are considered. Risks of abuse, exploitation and harm are driven by different forms of power and inequalities. Young people with disabilities, as project participants, volunteers or staff are at risk of being exploited and abused by those that hold power. Women and girls with disabilities are more likely to experience gender-based violence. By being aware of the diverse forms of abuse and exploitation that men and women with disabilities face, organisations can put in place measures that are effective in preventing harm and abuse against young people with disabilities, including women and girls with disabilities. The content in this guide offers general guidance on considerations to make in ensuring that appropriate safeguarding measures are applied in programmes.
Audience	It is one of a series of short guides developed by Sightsavers, within Futuremakers by Standard Chartered , and specifically written with Youth Business International programme partners in mind. While advice included in the document is more targeted towards YBI's youth entrepreneurship programme, we have tried to make these relevant to all Futuremakers projects.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To build greater disability confidence of the reader and how partners can better include youth with disabilities in their Futuremakers projects.2. To give specific examples, advice and simple steps on how to adapt projects to be more inclusive of youth with disabilities.

Safeguarding

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding are the measures put in place to protect vulnerable adults and children from harm, abuse, and exploitation, ensuring that their health, well-being, and human rights are protected.

Why is safeguarding of young people with disabilities especially important to consider?

People with disabilities are a vulnerable group that has a higher risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, harm, and exploitation. In fact, people with disabilities are four times more likely to

experience harm and abuse, in comparison to those without disabilities.¹ Women with disabilities face multiple forms of discrimination based on their gender, disabilities, and other factors. They are twice as likely to experience gender-based violence than women without disabilities.² A labour market which discriminates against gender and disability suppresses participation of women with disabilities. According to a 2020 report by the World Bank, women with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and have lower earnings than men with disabilities and women without disabilities.³

Applying a disability lens in safeguarding is important because it helps to ensure that the unique vulnerabilities and experiences of people with disabilities are considered. It allows for a more inclusive and equitable approach to safeguarding that recognises the intersection of discrimination that people with disabilities face. It also helps to promote the rights and dignity of people with disabilities and recognises their agency and autonomy.

By taking a disability-inclusive approach to safeguarding, we can create a more just and equitable society for all. By understanding and addressing these barriers, safeguarding measures can be more effective in preventing harm and abuse.

General guidance

- Develop a disability-inclusive safeguarding policy. Ensure that your organisation's safeguarding policy specifically addresses the needs and vulnerabilities of people with disabilities. This should include information on how to recognise and respond to different types of harm and abuse, as well as accessible procedures for reporting and investigating incidents
- Provide disability awareness training. Offer disability awareness training to all staff members, including volunteers, and partners to help them understand the barriers and challenges that people with disabilities face, and expected behaviours and reporting mechanisms as per your safeguarding policy. This can help staff members recognise potential risks and respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns
- Ensure that your partner selection and staff recruitment processes allow for background checks to screen out those with potential to abuse
- Carry out a project risk mapping – map out the common types of risks, the likelihood of the risk happening, and the impact it has on the participants, project, and your organisation. Based on the results of the risk mapping, develop strategies to effectively manage the risks
- Provide young people with disabilities enrolled in your program with information on your safeguarding policy, how to report a safeguarding issue, and the safeguarding issues response mechanism
- Ensure that your safeguarding policy, guides, reporting mechanism and awareness creation sessions are accessible to young people with diverse disabilities. This may

¹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240063600>

² <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240063600>

³

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099407312052226699/pdf/IDU0eb65b1db03a82042710aaa905ee2dc24b2d7.pdf>

include providing information in alternative formats such as braille, audio, large print etc

- Engage young people with disabilities, and organisations of people with disabilities to gain a better understanding of their needs and experiences. This can help inform your organisation's safeguarding approach and ensure that it is inclusive and responsive to the needs of people with diverse disabilities and identities
- For projects that challenge social and cultural norms, ensure you develop good relationships with the local community and leadership to increase acceptance and decrease risks towards specific participants, such as women with disabilities
- Ensure that your staff, volunteers, consultants, partners and service providers who are engaged with your organisation agree to uphold your safeguarding policy
- Monitor and evaluate. Regularly monitor and evaluate your organisation's safeguarding approach to ensure that it is effective in preventing harm and abuse. This should include gathering feedback from disabled individuals and disability organisations to ensure that their needs are being met

Taking these measures will promote the realisation of disability-inclusive safeguarding in your projects.

Now that I know, what do I need to do?

The severity of the impact of risk is dynamic, and highly influenced by the context. Some questions to reflect on in ensuring that you apply a disability lens in your project include:

- Does your organisation have a safeguarding policy? Does the policy explicitly mention and recognise the vulnerability of people with disabilities and provide risk management measures?
- Are your staff, volunteers, consultants, and partners informed on the safeguarding policy? Are they equipped to prevent, identify, and report on any risks likely to cause a safeguarding issue? Do you carry out background checks in your recruitment and partner selection processes to ensure that you weed out abusers?
- Are young people with disabilities informed about your organisation's safeguarding policy? Are they empowered to identify different forms of harm and abuse? Are they aware of staff behaviour that is acceptable and unacceptable? Do they confirm that they are aware of the reporting and complaints handling mechanisms? Are the reporting and complaint-handling mechanisms accessible to people with diverse communication needs?
- Do you monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of your safeguarding approach? Are young people with disabilities and organisations of people with disabilities consulted in the monitoring and evaluation?
- Do you have in place effective data protection and safeguarding response mechanisms that are cognisant of diverse communication needs and that prioritise the safety of survivors of harm and abuse?
- Does your project risk matrix ensure a comprehensive analysis of the project activities and how the design and implementation may expose young people with disabilities to harm? For example, planning for physical training sessions that end at night, with limited consideration for the safety of participants when travelling home.

- Does your organisation reflect on how economic empowerment is challenging social and cultural norms, and if this activity is likely to increase or reduce the risk of harm to young people with disabilities (especially women)?

Further reading

The Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub is a consortium that supports development and humanitarian organisations to strengthen their safeguarding policies and practices and has a wide range tools, trainings, and guides in ten languages:

<https://safeguardingsupporthub.org/essentials>

<https://safeguardingsupporthub.org/documents/pocket-guide-safeguarding-persons-disabilities-andor-mental-health-conditions-cso-0>

<https://asksource.info/resources/a-basic-guide-accessible-communications>

We work with partners in low-
and middle-income countries to
eliminate avoidable blindness
and promote equal opportunities
for people with disabilities.

www.sightsavers.org

www.sightsavers.org

Registered charity numbers 207544 and SC038110